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contractor and pay for it exorbitant prices. The sale of timber was practically in the hands of a single foreign firm. The result has been that the people of the country could neither trade in it and derive any profit from it nor get good timber for their own purposes.

Again, in the supply of salt, things were not as they should be. The salt was mixed with sand and sold to the people from the bankshalls. The merchants were largely responsible for this. The remedy, he suggested, was to leave not only the import but also the sale of salt to the merchants, instead of Government taking the responsibility themselves. This would stimulate competition and there would be greater inducement for the merchants to keep a supply of good salt equal to the demand. The Government might levy the duty on salt on its arrival at the ports.

Dewan's reply.—It may be of interest to you and your co-members to know that this was the endeavour of Government when the new Excise Department was created. The Government had under consideration the proposal to throw the import, storage and sale of salt open to competition. But no competitors came forward; and, as the next best course, Government entered into a contract for its supply on very favourable terms, and in order to prevent all risk of inferior salt being brought in, Government propose to depute a reliable agent to Bombay to select the salt that is to be imported by the merchants. There is every guarantee that good salt will be procured and with a view to prevent the salt being tampered with and mixed with sand the new rule for selling it by bags sealed at port depôts was introduced. That was not, however, acceptable to many and to meet their wishes, it has been proposed, as I have already told you, to relax the rule and allow sales to be held in retail also, as of old. As far as the salt question is concerned, every endeavour is being made not only to get the commodity on terms favourable to Government and the people, but also to have its quality improved and facilities afforded for its purchase by the people in small quantities, in good quality and at favourable rates.

145. Improvement of water-way between Cochin and Trivandrum.

Mr. K. Krishnan Pandala (Member, Quilon Taluk) suggested that Government might maintain between Cochin and Trivandrum a water-way fit for traffic and for steam-launch service. With the opening of the Quilon-Tinnevelly Railway, a good water-way connecting Quilon with Cochin had become necessary.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

The same member also requested—

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